



## POPLAR BATHS REGENERATION



**GUILDMORE**

## FOREWARD



### Welcome.

I am thrilled that Poplar Baths has been brought back to life - after an absence of nearly 30 years - to offer what can only be described as a truly first-class, leisure facility for residents and visitors of all ages.

This historic and treasured grade II listed building was originally opened in 1934 and, as you'd expect, has undergone a number of transformations over the years.

The baths distinctive art deco exterior design and towering statue of local philanthropist Richard Green outside the

building remains an intrinsic part of the Tower Hamlets landscape. But things have changed as well as a 25m swimming pool and learner pool, there is a large sports hall, a studio and a fully-equipped, state-of-the-art gym.

Whether you're a beginner or an experienced fitness enthusiast, you'll find a wide and varied range of sports and activities designed to enhance your health, wellbeing and quality of life. Badminton, gymnastics, netball and swimming are just some of the choices on offer, plus there's a great selection of holiday activity programmes. The new Poplar Baths offers something for everyone.

I know that many of you will have memories of using the baths and are pleased to see it back in use for present and future generations. Tower Hamlets Council is proud of this borough's rich heritage and monuments from its past. We are pleased to be able to bring one of our most important and historically-significant leisure facilities back to life.

### Enjoy.

**John Biggs,**  
**Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets**

## HISTORY OF POPLAR



From its origins as a small hamlet of the Isle of Dogs, the construction of shipyards and trading docks of the East India Company led to a substantial increase in Poplar's population in the early 19th century. The area retained a largely working class population, dependant on the docks and shipyards for its livelihood.

Poplar came to national prominence in the early twentieth century during the Poplar Rates Rebellion. Led by Labour Mayor George Lansbury, the council withheld tax revenue from the London County Council, Metropolitan Police, Asylums and Water Boards, instead directing it into local social and poor relief schemes, establishing equal pay for women (at a time when women under 30 could not vote) and a minimum wage for council workers which was far above market rate.

Their summons to the High Court was answered with a protest march of

thousands to Westminster, after which 30 of the councillors were imprisoned. Public pressure led to the councillors' release and the London Authorities Financial Provision Act of 1921 was rushed through, effectively equalising the tax burdens of rich and poor boroughs.

Lansbury's leadership was later commemorated in the local estate erected as a model of post war reconstruction during the 1951 Festival of Britain, while the construction of the Baths itself was an expression of the socialist ideals of the Borough in the inter-war period.

## HISTORY OF BATH HOUSES IN LONDON

The origins of public bathing facilities lie in the Victorian era, notably in bodies such as the Association for Promoting Cleanliness among the Poor, who provided facilities in the Glasshouse Yard Baths in the City, Goulston Square in Whitechapel and George Street, St Pancras, between 1844-6.

The Public Baths and Wash Houses Act of 1846-7 was passed as a result of public and religious pressure from figures like the Bishop of London. The Act gave all borough authorities the right to build public baths and was adopted by three metropolitan boroughs in London.

By 1852, almost 200,000 people were regularly using nine newly built baths in London, including Poplar Baths on East India Dock Road.





## A PIECE OF SOCIAL HISTORY

The first set of baths on the site was completed in 1852, during a short-lived period of prosperity for the area. It housed First and Second class pools, slipper baths (for private, individual ablutions) and a laundry facility.

Its second incarnation, opened in 1934, was concerned with more than just hygiene and sanitation, with facilities for health, fitness and community activities. Built at a challenging time for the local community: Poplar had the highest rate of poverty in London; it was commissioned by the local Mayor, George Lansbury who had just created history by withholding tax contributions to national Government, 'The Poplar Rates Rebellion', insisting that the greater need was nearer to home. He made the building contract conditional on local labour being used.

The building was immediately celebrated, the architectural press at the time describing it as "the first building in Britain to develop the idea for a low cost civic building [...] it stands above its contemporaries in architectural importance."

The building has an assertive art deco façade – determinedly different to the ornate Edwardian facades, or domestically scaled 'cottage' baths. The functional, industrial look was designed to be relevant and applicable to the local community of dockyard, transport and factory workers. It heralded the arrival of modernism and evoked civic pride, and ultimately optimism.



## HISTORIC BATHS IN USE

Beyond their obvious function as leisure facilities, public baths also played a role in improving the health and hygiene of the local population in an era before mass provision of sanitation.



The larger baths such as Poplar included public laundry facilities, drying racks and rows of 'slipper baths' - individual bath tubs whereby bathers were provided with a towel and soap, and could adjust temperature until comfortable. Public baths reached a peak of popularity among the working classes in the first decades of the 20th century.

In Western Europe, the Turkish bath as a method of cleansing the body and relaxation was particularly popular during the Victorian era, after promotion by David Urquhart, a diplomat and MP for Stafford. By the early twentieth century, Turkish Baths (or related Russian Baths) could be found in Poplar, Bethnal Green, Greenwich, Finsbury, East Ham, Stepney, Hackney, Woolwich, Bermondsey and Deptford.

In addition, the multi-purpose first class pool hall at Poplar was converted in winter months to function as a dance hall, cinema, theatre and boxing venue.

## DECLINE AND REVIVAL

The baths closed in 1986 after a section of the building fell into the pool hall. The building was then briefly used as a construction-training centre and had been derelict since 1994.

The next chapter in Poplar Baths history begins in August 2016 as the building emerges from over two decades of neglect and disuse, into its latest incarnation as a vibrant community leisure and fitness facility, expected to host over a thousand people each week.

Brought back to life again to a design by Pringle Richards Sharratt architects, the iconic Art Deco building steadfastly retains its original aims and social aspirations. Modernity in space, use and purpose and designed with the health and welfare needs of its community in mind.



## CONSERVATION PLAN

Highlights and complexities of the project

- **Retaining a single volume space to make the most of the visually and technically stunning original vaulted concrete arch construction.**
- **Removing the building's history of class segregation and opening up the spaces to create a simple, legible, rationalised and unified amenity.**
- **Maintaining and using the beautiful things of the building: entrance, staircase, sports hall, including replacing the glazed clerestory and stepped windows.**

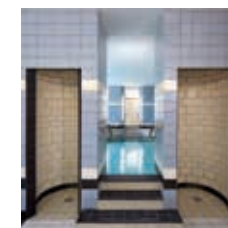
Just as previous incarnations of the building reflect the social history of Poplar with segregated class 'zoning'; so today's unified building also contains adaptations appropriate to the local community's ethnic diversity with careful provision for female-only areas and poolside screening.



Restoration and replacement

The Grade II listed building has a number of significant features, many badly damaged following years of poor maintenance. The remaining 1930s curved wall tiles, metal banding, black stone inlay and terrazzo flooring have required careful restoration work. These have been reinstalled in the reception area to recreate the impressive entrance hall. The bath's original plunge pool, unique in its configuration and form, has been entirely removed and re-sited within the new interior.

Fixtures and fittings have been carefully matched to those salvaged during the redesign and reconstruction, including



clocks, light fittings, door handles and signage. A feature bank has been created to store historic features for future display and reference.





## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE NEW BUILDING

Delivered as part of a wider public private partnership that also delivered 100 new socially let apartments and a new youth centre, the £15 million leisure centre houses a large sports hall; community pool (25x12.5m); learner pool (12.5x7m); gym; two studios for exercise classes; a roof-top multi-use games area; dry and wet changing areas; staff facilities including a prayer/quiet room; play area and café with small exhibition space. Returning this prominent building to its rightful status as an inviting, purposeful and valued destination.

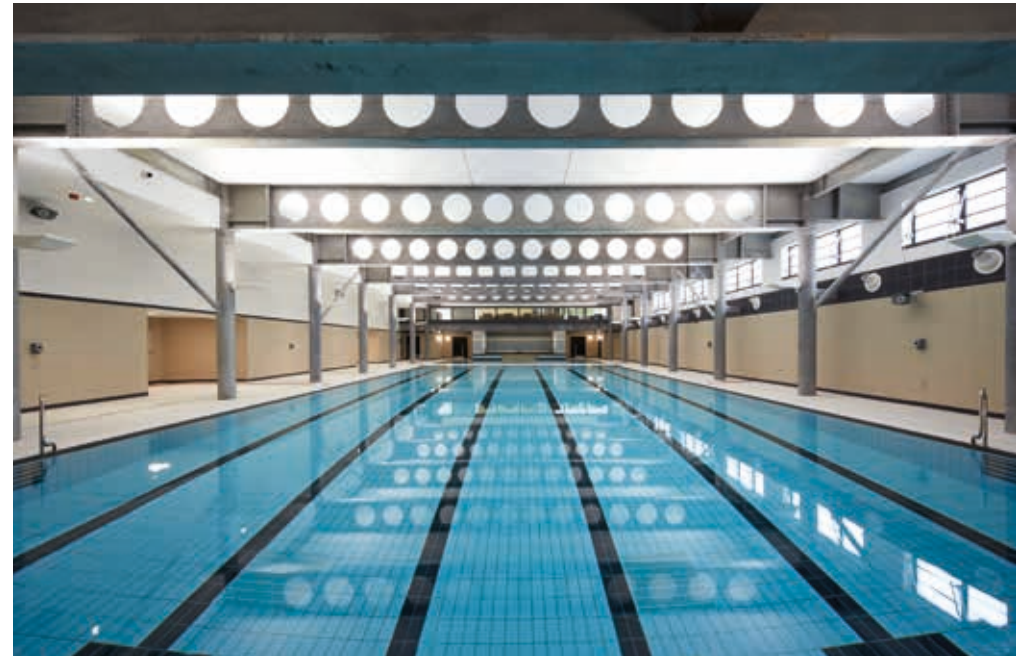
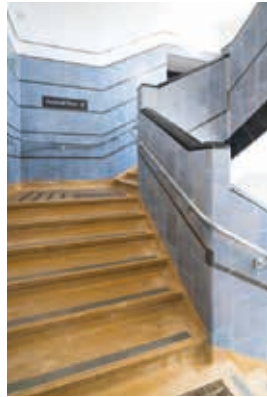
The Mayor of Tower Hamlets John Biggs said:  
***"I am thrilled that such a prestigious building has been brought back into use and will benefit the local community. Many people have memories of using the baths, and are pleased to see it back in use for new generations to enjoy."***

Claire Brady of Historic England added:  
***"Thanks to such a fantastic project, people will now be able to enjoy its facilities as well as appreciate the history and value of such a magnificent building."***





## BEFORE AND AFTER





## AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

Poplar Baths is a state-of-the-art facility at the heart of the local community providing programmes, projects and activities to help more people in the area get active, more often.



GLL's community team aims to support, engage and increase participation by all members of the community.

There are a number of programmes available already at Poplar Baths, however, we want to hear from you about what you want to see at your centre. Please email [iamtowerhamlets@gll.org](mailto:iamtowerhamlets@gll.org) or come into the centre to give us feedback.



Poplar Baths will have women's only health and fitness sessions including WOW (Women Only Wednesdays) evenings. Sessions will be held in the studio, sports hall, swimming pool, gym, with football sessions on the rooftop all-weather pitch. Men only swimming sessions will be held every Tuesday evening from 7.00pm until close.

Every Wednesday morning Poplar Baths will be inviting those aged 50 and over to its Young@Heart programme from 10.00am – 1.00pm. There will be a variety of activities available to take part in, including group fitness classes, sport classes and swimming. For more information please email: [jeanette.spenner@gll.org](mailto:jeanette.spenner@gll.org)

Whatever your age or ability, Poplar Baths has different health and fitness lessons and

courses to suit. They deliver high-quality, complete teaching programmes which give participants the opportunity to learn and refine their skills through a whole host of different sports and activities.

We offer lessons and courses in gymnastics, trampolining, football, Better Swim School and much more, to find out more please visit: [www.better.org.uk/lessonsandcourses](http://www.better.org.uk/lessonsandcourses)

We have teamed up with Badminton England and England Netball to run drop-in and coaching sessions for all abilities. No Strings badminton will take place twice a week with one evening and one weekend session and Netball Now sessions will take place weekly.

For more information about how to get involved visit: [www.better.org.uk/poplarbaths](http://www.better.org.uk/poplarbaths)



## TOWER HAMLETS



Situated north of the river Thames and east of the City of London, Tower Hamlets is a bustling and vibrant London Borough, which amongst other key developments includes the redeveloped Docklands area encompassing West India Docks and Canary Wharf.

As a borough with a history of global inward migration, it enjoys a diverse range of built environment and rich architecture created by a legacy of cultural and heritage markers contained within the established 'Hamlets' that front the historic docklands, river edges and ancient arterial roman roads. The borough benefits from large metropolitan green spaces at Victoria Park, Mile End Park and the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park – all supported by an extensive network of rivers and canals.

Tower Hamlets was one of the first councils in England to deliver an urban design-led spatial approach to plan making and also one of the first London boroughs to adopt its Core Strategy in 2010 (part of the Local Plan).

Underpinning the Local Plan is the policy objective of 'Re-Inventing the Hamlets' which sets out to strengthen and transform existing places in the borough by enabling diverse communities to prosper while building on their strategic importance as unique parts of inner London.

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## GUILDMORE



Guildmore has been creating and constructing intelligent and imaginative spaces for people to live and work since 1998.

Our project portfolio includes private and public partnership schemes, sensitive historic renovations, leisure facility fit-outs and major refurbishment programmes.

Design-led and family owned, Guildmore is a reliable provider of high quality, desirable properties, where people, communities and business can flourish.

Engin Ertosun, the Managing Director, has successfully built up a business which understands the value of public private development ventures. With an entrepreneurial style, strategic vision and operational expertise Engin ensures Guildmore provides its clients and partners with a high quality and comprehensive response on all development activity, regardless of scale or complexity.

Every new build is designed to be stylish, spacious and environmentally friendly. From first concept, through to planning, construction, design & fit-out, maintenance and support, Guildmore provides high quality sustainable buildings. No project is ever the same, yet you can always recognise a Guildmore project by its high standards, attention to details and innovation.

Our diverse range of developments represent innovative design and environmentally responsible construction. We set standards for best practice in sustainable, ethical building design, construction and operation and we have achieved accreditations to: The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), ISO:9001. 14001 & 18001, Waste & Resource Action Programme (WRAP).

We at Guildmore have significant experience in working in partnership with local authorities on large construction projects and delivering a comprehensive service. We work in collaboration with our partners ensuring open communication lines throughout the project, working together to achieve a common aim.

**[www.guildmore.com](http://www.guildmore.com)**

## GLL

Established in 1993, GLL is the largest UK-based not-for-profit charitable social enterprise delivering leisure, health and community services.

This means we work for the benefit of everyone: the public, the communities we work in, the environment, our staff and our partners.

Under the consumer facing brand Better, the organisation operates more than 200 public sport and leisure centres and 57 libraries in partnership with more than 30 local councils, public agencies and sporting organisations. Better leisure facilities enjoy 40 million visitors a year and have more than 650,000 members.

GLL exists to make community services and spaces better for everyone. In practice, that means investing all profits back into providing quality leisure and fitness facilities for the good of the communities where GLL operates.

We pride ourselves on providing high quality leisure and fitness facilities at affordable prices, so everyone in our partner boroughs can enjoy the benefits of a healthy and active lifestyle.

Alongside the organisation's core leisure and library divisions, GLL runs sport and legacy development, health intervention and education, as well as offering the GLL Sports Foundation, one of the largest independent support programmes for talented young athletes in the UK.

For more information about GLL please visit: [www.gll.org](http://www.gll.org)



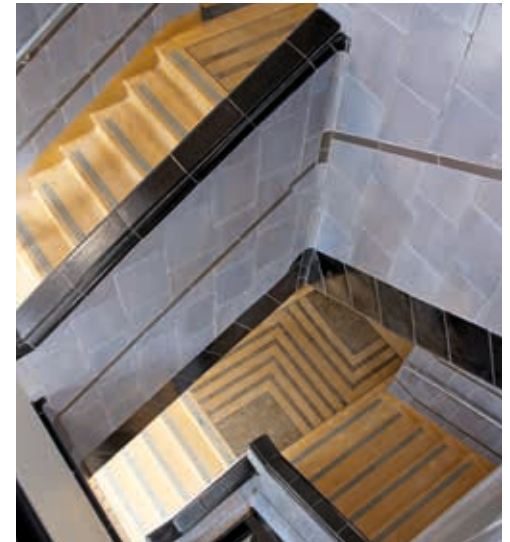
## PRINGLE RICHARDS SHARRATT ARCHITECTS

PRINGLE  
RICHARDS  
SHARRATT  
ARCHITECTS

Established in 1996, Pringle Richards Sharratt is known for its significant portfolio of cultural projects, including the award winning William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow and the Black Cultural Archives in Brixton; as well as its track record in urban landscape renewal and regeneration, most recently in Hull and Folkestone.

The ability to be involved in the restoration of Poplar Baths with its potential to help regeneration in such an important part of East London was a fantastic opportunity to build on such a substantial amount of work within the heritage and social community sectors.

***"Our design put the conservation of the building at its core – both in physical terms, but also in its role as a relevant and important local amenity."*** explains Malcolm McGregor, Director at Pringle, Richards, Sharratt. ***"A detailed process of conservation analysis and community engagement has resulted in a triumphant return of Poplar Baths – recreating the optimism and civic pride that heralded its previous openings."***





## PETER DEER AND ASSOCIATES

This exciting project included the partial demolition, reconstruction and refurbishment of an existing Grade II listed swimming pool and sports hall, which also included an adjacent 10 floor block of 60 flats.

Enabling works included the relocation of an existing substation which remained live throughout the construction work. The new leisure facility includes 2 swimming pools, wet and dry changing rooms, studios, gymnasium, roof top games area 'MUGA' pitch, reception and café. Heat generation is via a gas fired combined heat and power system.

PDA were involved from design inception to completion of the installation contract

and were responsible for the design of the mechanical and electrical services systems including heating, comfort cooling, ventilation, hot and cold water services, public health, lighting, power, fire alarm, data/telecommunications, photovoltaic panels, PA and access control systems. The services installations were integrated into the existing listed building fabric in the '1st class' listed sports hall section of the development.

[www.peterdeer.co.uk](http://www.peterdeer.co.uk)

## PEP CIVIL AND STRUCTURES LTD

PEP are a Civil and Structural Engineering Consultancy, formed from the merger of two well established consultancies in the early 1990s.

The company has progressively gained a significant reputation for our innovative and cost-effective approach on a range of technically challenging projects. We currently work in the leisure, retail, commercial, industrial, residential, educational and healthcare market sectors, with project values ranging from £2 million to £250 million.

We are an IPD Registered company under the Institution of Structural Engineers training system, and can therefore offer support, guidance and training to satisfy the Institution's requirements for Technician, Incorporated and Chartered membership.

[www.pepgroup.co.uk](http://www.pepgroup.co.uk)

## BREEAM

The following project related information is publicised in the case study:

### A basic description of the project and building

The Grade II listed Poplar Baths building originally opened in 1934 and was one of the finest early 20th century municipal swimming pools in the country. Since its closure in 1986 it had fallen into disrepair. In 2011 the council revealed plans for the regeneration of the Grade II listed building. Guildmore established a consortium to design, build and finance this project, including the maintenance and operation of the leisure Centre over a 35 year period, working together with GLL, one of the UK's largest operators of public leisure facilities.

### BREEAM Rating and score

Design stage of 'Very Good' with a score of 56%

### The key innovative and low-impact design features of the building

CHP (Gas), Natural ventilation to sports hall, LED lights (mostly) with presence & absence detection, water saving sanitary ware, pool water backwash recycling for WC flush water; low power fans.

### Basic Building Cost

£15 Million.

### Services Costs

£2.4 Million.

### External Works

£250 Thousand.

### Gross floor area

5251m<sup>2</sup> GIA.

### Total area of site – hectares

2060m<sup>2</sup> – 0.21ha.

### Function areas and their size

Non-Paying Public (Café, Play Area, Membership Desk) – 177m<sup>2</sup>.

Sports Facilities – 2623m<sup>2</sup>

- Pool Hall – 765m<sup>2</sup>;
- Sports Hall – 698m<sup>2</sup>
- Gym – 401m<sup>2</sup>
- Studio – 165m<sup>2</sup>
- Multi Games Area – 594m<sup>2</sup>.

Sports Ancillary Areas – 729m<sup>2</sup>

- Wet Changing Areas – 486m<sup>2</sup>
- Sports Viewing Area – 71m<sup>2</sup>
- Dry Change – 172m<sup>2</sup>.

Staff/Office Areas – 237m<sup>2</sup>.

Plant Rooms – 577m<sup>2</sup>.

#### Area of circulation

550m<sup>2</sup>.

#### Area of storage

239m<sup>2</sup>.

#### % area of grounds to be used by community (where relevant)

67% (3529m<sup>2</sup>).

#### % area of buildings to be used by community (where relevant)

67% (3529m<sup>2</sup>).

#### Predicted electricity consumption

Assume this should be kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum estimated at 120 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year.

#### Predicted fossil fuel consumption

Assume this should be kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/annum estimated at 280 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>/year.

#### Predicted renewable energy generation - kWh/m

Assume this should be kWh/year, estimated at 50,000 kWh per year.

#### Predicted water use – m<sup>3</sup>/person/year

Estimated at 15 m<sup>3</sup>/centre user/year.

#### % predicted water use to be provided by rainwater or greywater

Estimated at 15%, [pool backwash used for toilet flushing].

#### The steps taken during the construction process to reduce environmental impacts, i.e. innovative construction management techniques

- Segregated all waste
- Recycled water for all welfare facilities
- Operated wheel wash facility and regular street washing of the estate roads.

#### A list of any social or economically sustainable measures achieved/piloted.

- Local employment offering apprenticeships and long term work opportunities for both young and the long term unemployed in the area.
- Regular attendance at local authority event days
- Worked with Resident liaison teams
- Local suppliers.



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